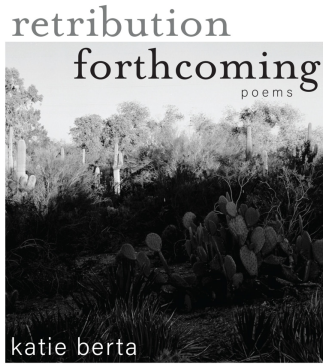


retribution forthcoming

Katie Berta



Debut collection finds humor & pleasure in a wounding world

In the lineage of New York School poets like Alice Notley and Bernadette Mayer, *retribution forthcoming* does its exploratory work through narrative and lyric modes, by simile and catalogue. By turns oblique and direct, Katie Berta's poems look vulnerably and honestly at sexual coercion and the psychological fallout of assault. These poems move through academic, public, and domestic spaces—and through the domain of memory—investigating the ways consumerist society reinforces and reifies gender conformity and performativity. The world of these poems and their trauma narrative is woven through and deepened by the heartfelt speaker's sense of humor and eagerness to love and trust.

For readers interested in interrogating ecological, capitalist, gendered, and private violence, for sensitive and intuitive listeners, and for lovers of poets like Natalie Scenters-Zapico, Jay Hopler, and Paisley Rekdal, *retribution forthcoming* is an inspired and visionary debut.

"*retribution forthcoming* fuses the abject with the sincere, the tender with the perverse. Katie Berta's voice is straight-up. Bare-faced. Flat-out. She catalogs both the worthwhile and the intolerable, and the result is exhilarating: a killing bite into the marrow of whatever it is we think we're doing here."

—Claire Wahmanholm, author of *Meltwater: Poems*

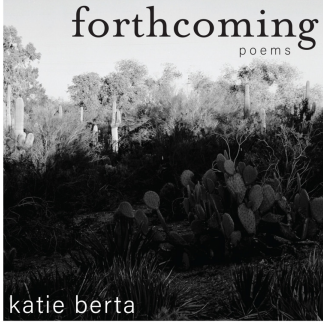
Katie Berta is the managing editor of *The Iowa Review*. Her poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, the *Cincinnati Review*, the *Kenyon Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*, among other journals. She teaches literary publishing at the University of Iowa and poetry at Arizona State University.

April 9, 2024
86 pages | 6 x 8.5
\$17.95 paper
ISBN 978-0-8214-1150-6
\$9.99 ebook
ISBN 978-0-8214-4760-4
Ohio University Press
www.ohioswallow.com
Distributed by CDC

Publicity contact:
Anna Zumbahlen
anna@thebluestairs.com
(720) 261-9786

Praise for *retribution forthcoming*

retribution forthcoming poems



“Katie Berta reminds us ‘the world is a fight’ and these poems refuse to pull punches. In *retribution forthcoming*, sarcasm collides with an exhaustion of the patriarchal clutch on society as well as the stark realities of womanhood, poethood, and traumas rife with contention and devastation to the human psyche. . . What I admire—what rattles me in delicious ways, what makes me say *damn* about *retribution forthcoming*—is how interiority gnashes its sharp teeth outside the skull. Berta’s poems are brutal in their honesty, compounding in their brilliance, and display the power of the mind—when infiltrated by a wounding world—and the mess, the necessary ruckus, that ensues.”

—Felicia Zamora, author of *I Always Carry My Bones*

“I can’t help but feel that the title of Katie Berta’s riveting, painful, and frequently hilarious book anticipates not the downfall of some famously (or privately) detested figure (or figures) but rather a punitive backlash against the speaker of these very poems, foreordained the moment she started to speak. You may hold in your hand the comeuppance of a criminal! Such is the cycle of negative self-talk Berta enacts and scrutinizes, with her ‘terrible brain,’ gripped by both our era’s asceticism (with its drive toward nothingness) and a craving for connection and intimacy that has existed presumably from the first human snub. These poems roil with thought and with dogs and with media-glut. They overflow with fear and love; devastating events and numb, weak aftermaths; what to eat, or slather into your insufficient skin: and still their capacities for humor, for tenderness--their raw courage in the face of a virulent internal naysayer—thrill and buoy us. While Berta reckoningly excavates the ‘truth beneath an I’ (and whether she can even believe in such a truth), her deeper search is for self-forgiveness, clarity, and joy. Can a book about rape and self-squeamishness and the twenty-first century’s alluringly pervasive threats (everywhere-to-everything) uplift us? Yes. Katie Berta reaches toward you with her love.”

—Sally Ball, author of *Hold Sway*

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